



Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in *Michigan*

PO Box 739 • East Lansing MI 48826 • [www.mircrc.org](http://www.mircrc.org)

November 28, 2012

On behalf of people of faith throughout the state and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan, we ask you to oppose HB 4143 and HB 4147.

We understand that there is no religious agreement on when life begins. We celebrate that this country was founded on the principle of religious diversity – where one set of religious views does not trump another's. We know that legislating among such diversity is challenging. However, this is why it is so important to leave very personal decisions to individuals and their own moral or religious values.

We understand that you work diligently to protect religious beliefs of all people. When doing so, please remember that when one set of religious beliefs starts to impede on another's that is no longer religious liberty, but intolerance.

This religious liberty is a cornerstone to our democracy. We are concerned that HB 4143 and HB 4147 have adverse religious implications. Rabbi Amy Bigman, one of our members, writes, "Judaism respects a fetus as a *potential* life, and places a very high priority on protecting it; however, the *existing* life of the mother takes precedence over the fetus. As such, there are circumstances in which a threat to a woman's life not only permits, but requires, an abortion. [*Ohalot* 7.6] There is no choice in this matter; the mother's life must be saved. All Jewish authorities agree on this." Rabbi Bigman and her colleagues fear bills such as HB 4143 and HB 4147 that restrict medical decision-making of doctors and women, could lead to situations where Jewish women would be forced to violate *halacha* [Jewish law]. This, we believe, is contrary to the religious liberty principle.

Secondly, we believe that, as morally autonomous persons, women are entitled to make medical decisions concerning their health and reproductive lives, according to their faith and conscience as well as on factual, sound, safe and compassionate medical advice.

Politicians should not tie doctors' hands when they need to determine what is best for a women's medical situation.

Also troubling, is that these bills disproportionately affect low-income women. To deny affordable or any access to health care services, is mean-spirited and contrary to most religious beliefs to be compassionate to those in need.

Finally, we believe that the best way to prevent the need for abortions is to prevent unintended pregnancies by improving access to education and health care. If the Michigan House is so concerned with reducing unintended pregnancies, and thus the number of abortions, we urge you to support commonsense policies such as those outlined in the Prevention Package.

Once again, please oppose House Bills 4143 and 4147. Thank you for your time.



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In Faith,

Joy Whitten

Pastor Robert Frederick

Rabbi Amy Bigman Pastor Kit Carlson